

BEWARE OF THE DANGERS OF THE INTERNET

Updated March 16, 2006 (first published May 23, 2000) (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

The Internet is a tremendous tool for the preaching of the Word of God and for communication to further the work of Jesus Christ, but it also holds great potential for moral devastation. A recent report by the Associated Press noted that "online sex addiction is a growing epidemic that is tearing partners apart and creating a dangerous new compulsion" ("Online sex addiction is growing," AP, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, May 6, 2000). Al Cooper, director of a sexuality clinic in San Jose, California, said "cybersex is changing the definition of sexual compulsion 'like crack cocaine changed the field of substance abuse.'" The report cited research that an estimated 15 percent of Internet users have visited online sex chat rooms or pornographic sites.

It is crucial that God's people protect themselves and their families from the moral dangers posed by the Internet.

USE COMMON SENSE

The following common sense tips are from Pastor Gordon Conner, Tabernacle Baptist Church, Vancouver, British Columbia --

1. Keep your computer in a public, open room. This is so simple! In a room that you can pass through at any time without warning will keep everyone on the right path. Having a computer in a bedroom with the door closed (when there is an Internet connection available) is not a good idea. Your family needs to understand that you have a right to see what they see on the Internet.
2. DO NOT give your children the Internet password! All ISPs require a password for account security, etc. You will need a password to connect to the ISP (and the Net) from your home computer. Not giving the password to the children will ensure that they only have access to the Internet while you are at home with them. If you are already "online" and they have access to the password, change the password.
3. Set a strict time limit. I believe that the longer we wander around on the Internet the more likely we are to get ourselves into trouble. Setting limits - 15 minutes, half hour, etc. will greatly reduce the temptation factor. We have recently

signed on with an ISP that has time limits built in. It automatically disconnects us after fifteen minutes. We can reconnect again, but it certainly helps us know how long we have been online. (It also greatly reduces our cost as well) I mean, how long does it take to find out today's baseball scores?

4. Keep a check on where you kids are going on the Internet. Exactly what is it they are looking for? Sports scores, a school research paper, or the Spice Girls? I would like people to know that every piece of information that comes to you over the Internet is stored on your computer until you remove it. From a practical sense, you are filling up your computer's hard drive every time you browse. (Some time ago I helped a friend remove 130 megabytes of information he did not know he still had!) It also allows you to go over some of the sites visited from your machine. (A U.S. study of computers at work found that the most visited site on work computers was the Penthouse site -- a pornographic magazine)

5. Never forget we have an adversary without and we have an old nature within. I want to trust my family; I want to trust myself; but I am foolish to do so. It is far better for me to flee youthful lusts than to think I can handle the temptations (Pastor Gordon Conner).

STAY OUT OF CHAT ROOMS

Much of the danger to young people on the Internet is involved with the chat rooms. A youth pastor recently told me that the Internet chat rooms are becoming more of a problem with his teenagers than even television, movies, videos, rock music, and such things. I recently learned of a pastor who has ruined his ministry and his family by developing a romance via a chat room. While e-mail between friends and relatives can be a very wonderful and effective means of communication, chat rooms commonly involve communication with strangers. I personally do not know a lot about the chat rooms, since I have never used them; but I do know that there is danger associated with them and they should be used, if at all, only with the most extreme caution. The Bible strongly warns, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33). Unwholesome relationships always bring moral corruption.

FILTERING SOFTWARE

Beyond basic common sense and godly caution, there are a number of filtering solutions to this problem which are available. One type of filtering is available in software which operates on the Internet user's own computer. Two of the most popular are NET NANNY and SURF WATCH.

HEDGEBUILDERS is another Internet filtering software package which blocks inappropriate web sites from a Christian perspective. Hedgebuilders@ij.net (e-mail), www.hedge.org/sr/0004.htm (web site).

WARNING ABOUT CYBER PATROL. Internet filter company Cyber Patrol won't block the Web sites of homosexual activist groups but are blocking Don Wildmon's American Family Association's Web site because of the "intolerance" of AFA's pro-family stand on homosexuality (6/98 Washington Watch). The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), a militant pro-homosexual group, is a charter member of Cyber Patrol's oversight committee! (Calvary Contender, August 1, 1998).

FILTERED INTERNET PROVIDERS

An even better solution might be provided by the following services which operate on the side of the Internet provider before the content even reaches the user's computer.

CLEAN INTERNET is a service operated by Bible-believing Christians who attend a fundamental Baptist church. It offers filtered high speed Internet access and is protected by a tamperproof server-side filtering system. The filtering database is updated daily, not weekly or monthly. There is no software to install, just fast, reliable, filtered Internet access. Local access numbers are available in many parts of the country. Unlimited Filtered Internet Access through Clean Internet is only \$19.75 per month with no start up fee or software to buy. They offer a special discount of \$12.75 per month for senior pastors. You can also save by signing up for 3, 6, or 12 months at a time. IF CLEAN INTERNET IS NOT AVAILABLE IN YOUR AREA YOU CAN USE A LOCAL ISP AND THEIR FILTERING FOR \$4.00 PER MONTH. There is still no software to buy, they will talk you through the setup. Contact 2318 Dombey Rd., Portage, IN 46368. 219-763-6344, sales@cleaninter.net (e-mail), <http://CleanInter.net/> (web site). By subscribing to CleanInter.net you not only gain quality filtered Internet service, you help support Brother Cloud. When you tell them you were referred by me, they give us \$10.

Following are other filtered, family-oriented Internet providers:

CLEAN FAMILY INTERNET

<http://www.cleanfamily.com/>

FAMILIES ONLINE

<http://www.familiesonline.net/>

FAMILYCLICK

<http://FamilyClick.Com/>

FAMILY CONNECT PORN BLOCKER

<http://www.PornBlocker.com/>

FAMILY NET

<http://www.family.net/>

GLOBAL FAMILY NETWORK

<http://www.globalfamilynetwork.com/>

INTEGRITY ONLINE

<http://www.integrityonline.com/>

INTERNET 4 FAMILIES

<http://www.globalfamilynetwork.com/>

RATED-G ONLINE

www.rated-g.com

SAFEBROWSE

<http://www.safebrowse.com/>

TRUSTED NET

www.trusted.net

WISE CHOICE

<http://www.wisechoice.net/home/>

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